

2024

THE CORPS RAPPOR

Meridian Conservation Corps Annual Report



MANAGING THE LAND AS A COMMUNITY

A note from Meridian Township's Land Stewardship Coordinator, Emma Campbell

What does it mean to manage land? How does one full-timer & 3 part-time staff tackle stewardship for 1,700 acres? Even with a healthy budget, we don't reach all our desired annual goals. Year end reporting is a time to reflect & be grateful for all we have accomplished. But, as I sift through the year, I can't stop myself from thinking of what more we could have done. Perhaps we could have managed our time more efficiently, or utilized different tools & equipment. Did we get enough fire on the ground to nurture disappearing lineages of native species? Don't forget to map that phragmites you saw on your way home from work today. What about that Riparian Buffer Program we wanted to develop last year? As I drive around my office which is the entire Township, my to-do list gets longer, and I feel the urgency grow greater. Can what I'm doing, really be enough? Also, why am I so hard on myself? I am but one person. Is this how everyone feels? Quite often these chaotic thoughts & emotions swirl through my head. But, as I pull up to an MCC workday, these feelings become smaller & smaller, soon disappearing into a smile. I could be having the worst day, and once I get on that trail with my volunteers, I see the passion & caring that gets to be my world in that moment. Each little seed, every transplant, and all the invasive stems pulled & cut, it all means so much! Community & conservation are an inspiring concept we get to practice every week. You should be so proud for showing up when you do! You not only sustain our corner of the world, but my sanity too. You are turning intention into action every time you come out. Thank you cool conservation cats, you truly are what makes the world go round!

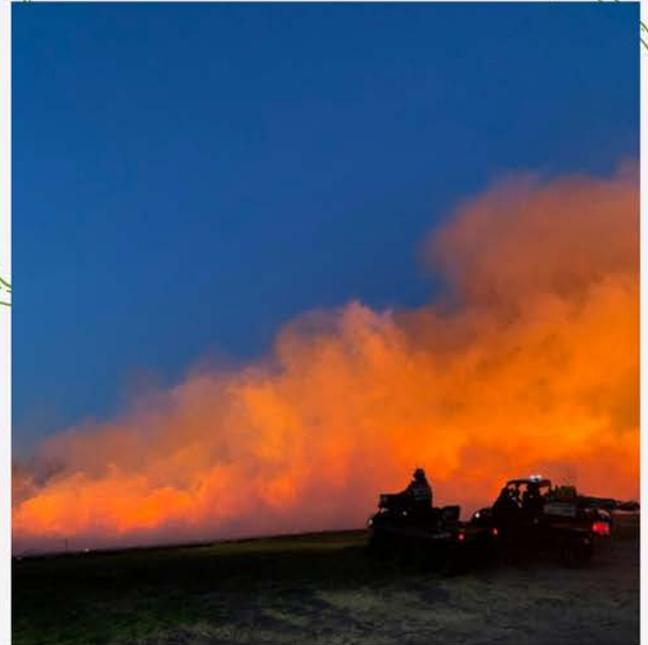


STEWARDSHIP SUCCESS

2024 Stewardship at a Glance



- 659 HOURS OF STEWARDSHIP COMPLETED IN THE TOWNSHIP
- 348 CORPS MEMBERS WITH 71 NEW SIGNUPS IN 2024
- 45 STEWARDSHIP WORKDAYS
- 10 EDUCATIONAL EVENTS
- 17 VERIFIED VERNAL POOLS
- 12 COLLABORATIVE PROJECTS & OPPORTUNITIES
- 1 SUCCESSFUL PRESCRIBED BURN
- 105 SPECIES OF NATIVE PLANTS ETHICALLY COLLECTED
- 3 NEW ADDITIONS TO THE STEWARDSHIP STAFF
 - Jennifer Soria, Lucy Breda, Rachel Mickey



INVASIVE SPECIES STRIKE TEAM

Pull, cut, dab, and restore!



- 18 WORKDAYS DEVOTED TO INVASIVE REMOVAL
- 23 DIFFERENT SPECIES REMOVED AND MANAGED
- 10 HERBACEOUS INVASIVES:
 - Dame's rocket, garlic mustard, Japanese hedge parsley, Japanese Knotweed, purple loosestrife, phragmites, reed canary grass, lesser celandine, yellow rocket & sweet clover
- 13 WOODY INVASIVES:
 - invasive bittersweet, honeysuckle (4 species), autumn olive, common & glossy buckthorn, multiflora rose, Japanese barberry European privet, black locust, & tree of heaven
 - Wildtype Ecological Services began management on a priority stand of mature black locust at Davis Foster Preserve this fall.
- 12 PRESERVES & 14 PARKS MANAGED FOR INVASIVE SPECIES
- GOLDEN BAMBOO & CUT-LEAF TEASEL WERE IDENTIFIED FOR FUTURE MANAGEMENT

(BELOW) VOLUNTEERS SCOUT ALL THE TRAILS OF RED CEDAR GLEN FOR JAPANESE HEDGE PARSLEY. MAKE SURE TO KEEP THIS AGGRESSIVE PEST OUT OF YOUR GARDEN!



(BELOW) STAFF WORKED HARD THIS SUMMER MANAGING PURPLE LOOSESTRIFE, AN INVADER OF WETLANDS, LIKE DAVIS FOSTER.



(BELOW) LESSER CELANDINE CAN CARPET ENTIRE FLOODPLAINS. ITS AGGRESSION PROMPTED THE FORMATION OF THE MI LESSER CLEANDINE COALITION, WHICH WE ARE A PROUD PARTNER OF.



INVASIVE SPECIES STRIKE TEAM



(LEFT) THIS FALL TIHART WORKDAY WAS ONE FOR THE BOOKS! WE FINALLY GOT TO START REMOVING HONEYSUCKLE ALONG THE PROPERTY LINE. NEED A GOOD WORKOUT? WE KNOW ONE!

(BELOW) GARLIC MUSTARD IS A PAIN IN OUR SIDES, BUT IT IS EDIBLE & DELICIOUS. JACOB MADE YUMMY PESTO WITH THIS BUNCH!



(BELOW) MANY BUCKETS OF MUSTARDS WERE REMOVED FROM HARRIS AT OUR EARTHDAY EVENT. THANK YOU STYKA FAMILY!



(LEFT) REMOVING INVASIVES FROM A WETLAND BUFFER IN LLNP ALWAYS MAKES THE MCC SMILE!



(BELOW) ANDREW HAS REALLY HELPED US OUT THIS YEAR, BRINGING HIS OWN CHAIN SAW & CUTTING LARGE TREES & SHRUBS FOR US!

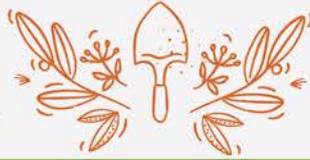


(LEFT) SPRING REMOVAL OF MUSTARDS AT LEGG PARK LED US TO A NICE POPULATION OF WOODLAND PHLOX. AND OF COURSE THIS CREW KICKED BUTT! AMY, BRUCE & JASON ARE SPRING PULL VETERANS!



PLANTING A NATIVE MERIDIAN

Collect, sort & plant!



- 12 WORKDAYS DEVOTED TO NATIVE SEED SOWING & PLANTING
- Transplants & seeds are lovingly collected by MCC volunteers & staff from remnant populations in our parks & preserves
 - Keeping the genetic diversity as local as possible means the highest benefit for pollinators
- 18 NATURAL AREAS RECEIVED NATIVE TRANSPLANTS & SEEDS SOWN
- 12 DIFFERENT SPECIES & 456 TRANSPLANTS INSTALLED:
 - A mix of New Jersey Tea, butterfly weed, smooth blue aster, rattlesnake hawkweed, bristly greenbrier, wintergreen, winterberry, early & showy goldenrod, Robin's plantain, bladdernut, & American plum
- 42 SPECIES WERE SOWN FOR WINTER, THE REMAINING SEEDS WILL BE GROWN INTO TRANSPLANTS OR SOWN NEXT SEASON

(BELOW) MATT, PLANTS SHOWY GOLDENROD IN DAVIS FOSTER. LOOK FOR THE TALL YELLOW SPIKES IN LATE SUMMER



(BELOW) A SMOOTH BLUE ASTER PLANTED LAST YEAR AT RED CEDAR GLEN PRESERVE GRACES US WITH ITS BEAUTIFUL HUES



(BELOW) JASON SACRIFICES THE WARMTH OF HIS GLOVE TO MINDFULLY SOW SEEDS ON A BITTER COLD DAY IN TIHART PRESERVE



PLANTING A NATIVE MERIDIAN

Collect, sort & plant!

- 3 WORKDAYS DEVOTED TO NATIVE SEED COLLECTION
- 5 WORKDAYS DEVOTED TO SEED PROCESSING
- 105 DIFFERNT NATIVE SPECIES COLLECTED FROM PARKS & PRESERVES
- THIS WAS A RECORD YEAR FOR AMOUNT OF SEED COLLECTED, AS WELL AS SPECIES DIVERSITY
- FOR THE FIRST TIME VOLUNTEERS & STAFF GOT ALL SEED PROCESSING WRAPPED UP BY THE END OF 24'
 - Yay for seed sorting parties!



SOME SEEDS ARE VERY WELL CAMOFLAUGED AND A TREAT TO FIND!

(BELOW) VOLUNTEERS ARE SHOWN HOW TO IDENTIFY & ETHICALLY COLLECT SEEDS



(BELOW) STAFF FOUND A ROBUST REMNANT STAND OF BLUE VERVAIN!



(BELOW) VOLUNTEERS & STAFF GET SOME WONDER & WHIMSY FROM STEVE THOMAS EXPLAINING THE LIFE OF A SEED FROM START TO FINISH. NATURE IS NEAT!



WEEKDAY WARRIORS & CLEAN UP CREW

Digging trash out of wetlands is what we do!



- 4 WORKDAYS DEVOTED TO REMOVING TRASH FROM PRESERVES, PARKS AND ROADWAYS
- AN ESTIMATED 1,000 POUNDS OF TRASH REMOVED
- 10 TIRES, HUB CAPS, CAR PARTS, PLASTIC LITTER, TAKE OUT WASTE, & CARDBOARD BOXES
 - Favorite piece of trash found: a flat-screen tv
- WEEKDAY WARRIORS ARE DEDICATED TO MORE THAN JUST TRASH CLEANUP
 - This year they planted native species, collected & processed seeds, removed invasive species, and cleaned up trash!
- THE WEEKDAY WARRIORS ARE GROWING MOVEMENT, OUR WORKDAY NUMBERS HAVE DOUBLED IN 2024
- SPECIAL SHOUTOUT TO MATTHEW EDMONDS FOR PICKING UP LITTER IN THE TOWNSHIP WEEKLY & REPORTING PROBLEM AREAS

THANK
YOU

(BELOW) VOLUNTEERS HAVE FUN PICKING TRASH OUT OF NANCY MOORE WETLAND



(BELOW) BRUCE PLANTS WINTERBERRY SHRUBS IN THE WETLAND BUFFER AT HILLBROOK PARK



(BELOW) TIRES, TVS & TAIL LIGHTS! THEY TOSS IT, WE FIND IT.



VERNAL POOL PATROL

A citizen science program working to protect our smallest wetlands!

- Volunteers complete a statewide training program & monitor vernal pools 3 times a year to gather vital data that helps protect these valuable wetlands
- Species like fairy shrimp & blue-spotted salamanders depend on these temporary pools for their life cycles
- **17 VERIFIED VERNAL POOLS IN THE TOWNSHIP**
 - Thank you to MCC volunteers, Bertha Bullen, Jim Kruse, Bruce Peffers, Susan Andrews, Barbara Scott, Sam Diehl, & Elizabeth Fedorchuk for contributing data!
- **THERE ARE OVER 140 UNVERIFIED POOLS IN THE TOWNSHIP**
 - Want to help out? Visit the MI Vernal Pools Partnership at mivernalpools.com to find out more, or stay tuned for more information in March!



(BELOW) FAIRY SHRIMP THRIVE IN VERNAL POOLS SINCE THE WATER INTERMITTENTLY DRIES UP & KEEPS PREDATORY FISH OUT.



(BELOW) FAIRY SHRIMP & OTHER MACROINVERTEBRATES DRAW EYES DOWN & INTO A MAGICAL MICROSCOSM



(BELOW) ETHERAL STAR FLOWER IS FOUND NEAR VERNAL POOLS IN LAKE LANSING NORTH.



(LEFT) FINGERNAIL CLAMS ARE ALWAYS A FUN FIND! IF YOU SEE THESE IN DRY, LOW AREAS OF THE WOODS, YOU MAY HAVE FOUND A VERNAL POOL IN THE OFF SEASON!

PRESCRIBED BURN PROGRAM

Restoring native ecosystems with fire!



- 17 ACRES WAS SUCCESSFULLY BURNED THIS YEAR
- DAVIS FOSTER PRESERVE RECIEVED A BEAUTIFUL BURN ON ITS MOST NORTHERN UNIT
- EVENING CONDITIONS WERE PERFECT FOR THIS FINICKY AREA. WOODCOCK DANCED & FROGS SANG IN THE BACKGROUND
- DAVID BORNEMAN LLC & HIS CREW CONDUCTED A SAFE & EFFECTIVE BURN
 - They burn private parcels too, including several in the Township!

PRESERVES THAT ARE CONSISTENTLY BURNED SHOW THE MOST PLANT DIVERSITY

- Research shows that prescribed fire simulates historic conditions & increases species diversity. we are conducting floristic surveys to track this!

(BELOW) THIS BURN OCCURED NEAR EVENING WHEN CONDITIONS WERE THE MOST STABLE. IT WAS A BEAUTIFUL NIGHT!



(BELOW) DAVID BORNEMAN'S CREW DID AN INCREDIBLE JOB BUILDING A SLOW FIRE THAT GREW INTO A HEALTHY (& SAFE) ROAR.



(BELOW) STAFF WALKED POST-BURN DAVIS FOSTER TO LOOK FOR ANY WILDLIFE MORTALITY. WE FOUND THIS LITTLE GARTER SNAKE!



(LEFT) STAFF CONDUCTED FLORISTIC SURVEYS AT 4 PLOTS WITHIN DAVIS FOSTER. WE ARE LOOKING TO QUANTIFY THE FLORAL DIVERSITY THAT WE KNOW FIRE CAN BRING TO A NATURAL AREA.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS



We can't have hard work without a little fun!

- 8 TRAILSIDE ECOLOGY WALKS
- 1 FANTASTIC FUNGI HIKE WITH MSU'S DEPARTMENT OF PLANT, SOIL & MICROBIAL SCIENCES
- FISHING DERBY MACROINVERTEBRATE EXPLORATION
- These educational hikes are not just about learning new plants, insects, wildlife & fungi. They are meant to spur natural curiosity & relax your mind with the sights, sounds and smells of the outdoors. Nature is neat & very good for our mental & physical health!



(BELOW) STAFF SPEND TIME AT THE HISTORICAL VILLAGE FISHING DERBY TEACHING VISITORS ABOUT MACROINVERTEBRATES & THEIR IMPORTANCE TO WATER QUALITY



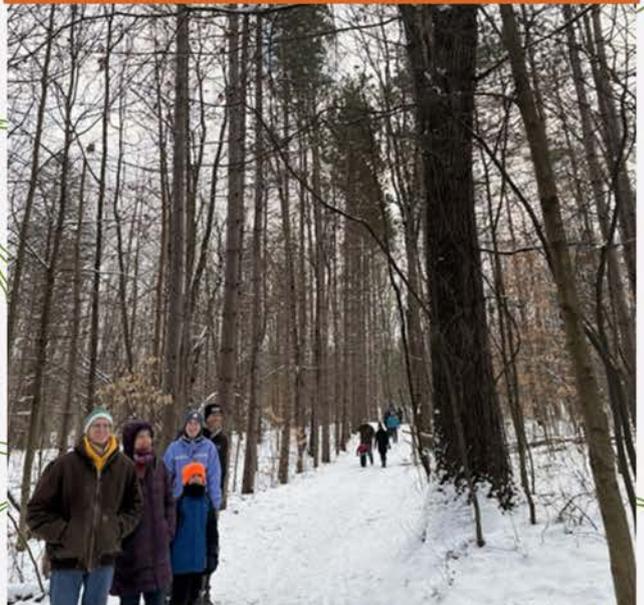
(BELOW) ARTIST CONK MUSHROOMS ARE ALWAYS A LOVELY FIND. WE GAWKED AT A WHOLE TREE FULL OF THEM.



(BELOW) THIS YEAR FOR THE WINTER SOLSTICE WE DID A SUNRISE HIKE. IT WAS SO BEAUTIFUL, WE WILL CERTAINLY REPEAT THIS ONE!



(ABOVE) MSU STUDENTS LEAD A BEAUTIFUL & VERY INFORMATIVE FUNGI WALK. IT WAS A GREAT TURNOUT! (RIGHT) WHEN WE LOOK CLOSER, WE MAY JUST SEE A LITTLE TREE FROG SITTING HAPPILY ON A MILKWEED LEAF. STOP FOR THE SMALL THINGS!



STEWARDSHIP COLLAB

Connect, Learn, and Conserve!!

• MICHIGAN WATERWAYS STEWARDS

- 2024 was our second year working with MI Waterways Stewards on their Red Cedar River Cleanup & Stewardship with Delta Sigma Phi, MSU Landscaping & Grounds, & East Lansing.

• CHIPPEWA MIDDLE SCHOOL

- Every year, Matt Prinz brings his middle school students to Hartrick Park to remove invasive species & pick up trash

• INDEPENDENT BANK OF OKEMOS

- Staff from this local branch came out and worked very hard for 4 hours removing dense autumn olive at Davis Foster Preserve
- If that wasn't enough, they kindly donated \$5,000 to Township efforts! How amazing!

• MSU DEPARTMENT OF FISHERIES & WILDLIFE

- Department of Fisheries & Wildlife Deer Targeted Anti-Tick Project is in its second year. This project will provide important data on our white-tailed deer & tick population in Meridian

• MI LESSER CELANDINE COALITION

- A collaborative of conservation districts, CISMA's, parks departments, & more that are coordinating species surveys & targeted strikes along the Grand River. If you see it, report it on the Michigan Invasive Species Invasive Network (MISIN).

• MERIDIAN UTILITY CREWS

- Partnering with stewardship staff, the utility crew has reduced mowing in several areas, such as our native plant buffers in Central Park South!

(BELOW) 160 VOLUNTEERS CAME OUT! FOR THE FIRST TIME THIS YEAR WE FOCUSED ON INVASIVE SPECIES STEWARDSHIP & CHOPPED SHRUBS.



(BELOW) INDEPENDENT BANK STAFF ABSOLUTELY KICKED INVASIVE SHRUB BUTT ON THIS VERY CHILLY, BUT BEAUTIFUL MORNING!



(BELOW) OUR PARKS UTILITY CREW REDUCED MOWING IN THIS AREA & INSTALLED A LOVELY FENCE FOR MCC ESTABLISHED NATIVE BUFFERS!



VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

The MCC is literally made up of the most amazing humans ever, showing up in rain, snow & shine. These two volunteers go even further, devoting every other Saturday & more to conserving our natural areas. Invasive shrubs run & hide when they see these two coming with saws & loppers in hand! They have both planted hundreds of native plants, and collected hundreds more seeds! We could not be luckier to have these dedicated stewards as part of our community. Thank you Bruce & Jason!!

BRUCE PEFFERS

MCC VOLUNTEER SINCE 2020

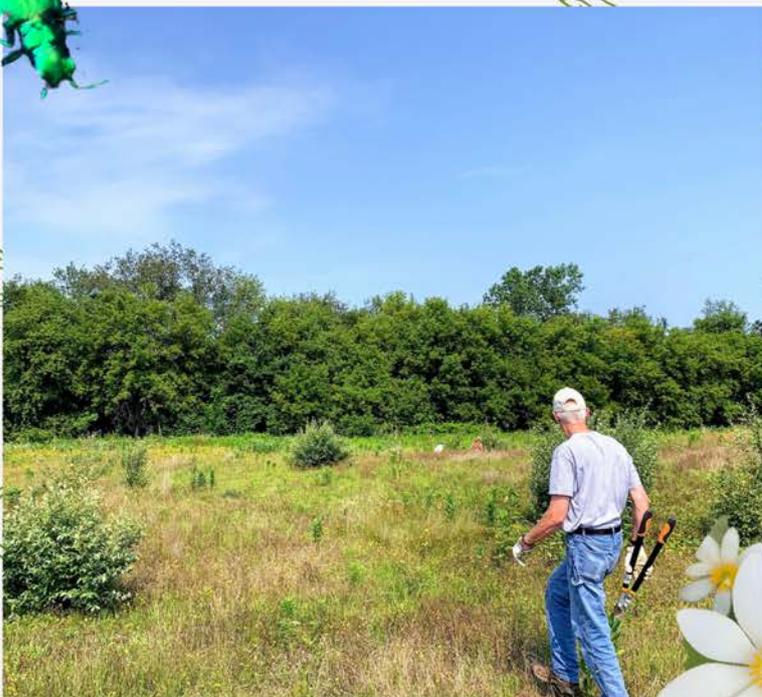
- Bruce Peffers retired from an engineering position, with an educational background in fisheries. Since retiring, Bruce became active in Township activities including the Green Dialogues, Green Team, Green Burial Committee, Vernal Pool Patrol, the Corridor Improvement Authority, as well as participating in weekly Meridian Conservation Corps stewardship activities. What Bruce likes best about being part of the MCC is that he has become so familiar with all the Townships natural areas and gets to contribute to their preservation. His favorite park is Legg Park and his favorite stewardship activity is winter-time invasive plant removal.



JASON HANFLIK

MCC VOLUNTEER SINCE 2023

- Jason Hanflik has lived in Meridian Township for 10 years. He works as a Financial Institutions Examiner for the Department of Insurance and Financial Services at the State of Michigan. He first learned about the MCC through the Township newsletter and learning more about removing invasive species. Jason said his, "zeal for MCC stems from my parents, particularly my mother. She instilled in me a commitment to protecting our environment and the joy of watching things grow. I look forward to getting up on Saturday mornings and helping with the MCC projects that are benefitting our community."



STAFF BEHIND THE SCENES

*Our Stewardship Team is small, but mighty!
Here are some of our favorite moments from the field!*



THANKS HARPER HILL TREE SERVICE, LLC! THEY EVEN KEPT AN EYE ON BABY TURKEYS WE FOUND!

(RIGHT) 4.5 ACRES WAS MOWED AT TIHART PRESERVE TO OPEN UP MORE SUNLIGHT FOR OUR NATIVE PLANTINGD BUBS IN THIS AREA. WE ARE SEEING MORE GROWING EACH YEAR!

(BELOW) WE LOVE GETTING THE OPPORTUNITY TO SAVE TURTLES FROM THE ROADWAY. THIS SNAPPER REQUIRED A 30-GALLON TOTE!



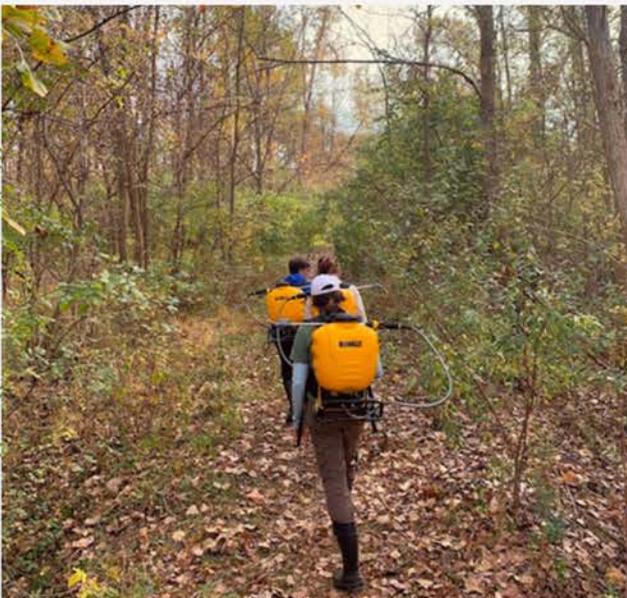
(BELOW) WE FOUND THIS LITTLE ONE STRANDED IN THE MIDDLE OF CENTRAL PARK DRIVE. WE TOOK IT TO THE SAFETY OF A WATERFOWL REHABILITATOR!



(LEFT) THIS WAS A RECORD YEAR FOR CULVERS ROOT! IT SHOT UP IN PLACES WE HAVE NEVER SEEN IT BEFORE. WE HYPOTHESIZED THAT THE INCREASED RAINFALL HAD SOMETHING TO DO WITH IT.



(BELOW) AUTUMN OLIVE DECIDED TO STRIKE BACK! AFTER A DAY OF HACKING THESE SHRUBS, A STUMP POPPED OUR TRUCK TIRE.



(LEFT) OUR CREW WORKS HARD DURING THE GROWING SEASON TO COVER AS MUCH LAND AS POSSIBLE TO MANAGE DIFFICULT INVASIVE SPECIES SUCH AS JAPANESE KNOTWEED & PURPLE LOOSESTRIFE.



STAFF BEHIND THE SCENES

*Our Stewardship Team is small, but mighty!
Here are some of our favorite moments from the field!*



(RIGHT) OUR ORGANIZATION WAS GREATLY IMPROVED THIS YEAR WITH THE PURCHASE OF A 10'X20' SHED. OUR STEWARDSHIP SHED HAS EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO MANAGE THE LAND!

(BELOW) AFTER DISCOVERING A NEAT LITTLE AREA IN HARTRICK PARK, WE ALSO FOUND A VERY DISTINGUISHED & OLD ARTIST CONK FUNGI



(BELOW) STAFF WORKED SEVERAL DAYS TO PICK JAPANESE HEDGE PARSLEY FROM SOME LOVELY NATIVE AREAS IN DAVIS FOSTER.



(LEFT) IN ADDITION TO A STEWARDSHIP SHED, WE ALSO GOT AN 8'X20' GREENHOUSE! THIS HELPED KEEP OUR NATIVE PLANTS HAPPY & WE ARE EVEN GROWING PLANTS FOR THE 2025 SEASON!



(BELOW) WE COULD NOT RESIST FROM GETTING THIS PHOTO OP OF A VERY SUCCESSFUL & SAFE BURN AT DAVIS FOSTER THIS PAST SPRING.



(LEFT) THE VOLUNTEER THANKQUET IS OFFICIALLY BACK & HERE TO STAY! THIS VOLUNTEER MEET & GREET IS SO INSPIRING, ALL THE HELPERS IN ONE ROOM TO GET THE THANKS THEY DESERVE!



FAVORITE PHOTOS OF 2024



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